



COVER SHEET

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Developing A Team Vision

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TEAM VISION

'Whatever you can do, or dream you can, begin it. Boldness has genius, power and magic in it. Begin it now'. (Goethe).

Defining team vision

The overriding reason why people work in teams is because they share a common goal or purpose which they believe will be achieved more successfully by working together. This notion of shared purpose or shared vision is the defining element of teams at work. By taking the time to clearly define team vision, purpose and objectives, those who work within teams have a greater chance of being effective and creative in their work.

Confusion surrounds the use of words such as 'vision', 'mission statement', 'objectives' and 'goals'. A useful way of thinking about the meaning of these notions is to see them as parts of a tree. (See Figure 1.) Vision represents the base of the tree growing from its roots in the values, skills and beliefs of those within the team. The mission statement or trunk is the observable statement of the team's purpose. The team goals are then the main branches of the tree which produce the objectives (the twigs). Finally, the action plans for achieving objectives can be seen as the leaves or foliage giving the tree its colour.

An example will illustrate the difference between the concepts. Consider the vision of the Springwood Health Care Team:

Team Vision: Springwood Health Care Team

To give patients responsibility for their health and to make health promotion our primary orientation rather than illness treatment. We are also committed to collaborative working together with patients, each other and the community. We place great emphasis on holistic approaches to health and the growth and well-being of our patients. We have a

fundamental commitment to excellence in health care with the aim of improving the quality of life for the whole community. This vision is based on our shared values of:

- *respect for other human beings,*
- *cooperation to achieve shared goals,*
- *the importance of freedom of choice for all individuals,*
- *the importance of equality of treatment and opportunity for all within our geographical area,*
- *commitment to effectiveness and excellence in our work, with the overall aim of improving the quality of life of our patients, those in the community and of all those who work in this team.*

This vision of the health care team sets out the principal values which underlie and drive the work of the team. It also indicates the degree of cohesion between the various aspects of the vision statement and represents an ideal for which to aim.

The mission statement of the team

'Our mission is to promote the health, growth and well-being of all of those in our community, including patients, relatives, community members and team members by respecting the individual, encouraging co-operation and collaboration and emphasizing excellence in all we do.'

This mission statement provides a short motivating set of words, summarizing and encapsulating the principle elements of the team's vision. It serves as a daily reminder to those who work in or with the team of the kinds of orientations that are expected in their joint working. It is a motivating symbol, helping the team to achieve its overall aims, and to make important choices at times when there is uncertainty about a decision. It provides a clear pointer to the directions the team should take when presented with alternative ways forward, or when presented with difficult decisions about the team's work.

Team goals

Springwood defined the following broad goals as a result of articulating its mission statement:

- 1. Increase the participation of patients in all aspects of Springwood health care.*
- 2. Emphasise health promotion as much as disease treatment in work with patients.*
- 3. Involve all those who work in the team in setting goals and in decision-making.*
- 4. Promote the growth and well-being of team members.*
- 5. Improve health care in the Springwood community.*
- 6. Aim for excellence in all of our team activities.*
- 7. Develop greater knowledge of holistic and alternative approaches to health care in the community.*

These goals are derived directly from the vision of the team and from its mission statement. They describe clearly the overall aims that team members have for the team's work.

In order to illustrate the specific objectives of the team and how they are derived from goals, consider the objectives relating to goal 3:

Example: Goal 3 (above)

To involve all those who work in the team in setting goals and in decision-making.

Objectives to encourage group participation

- 1. To ensure receptionists, nurses, managers and other staff participate in staff meetings.*

2. *To invite and encourage all staff members to input their views on the goals of the team.*
3. *To encourage all staff to share information with one another so that they have sufficient knowledge of team activities to influence team goals.*
4. *To interact regularly in order to encourage joint influence over the activities of the team.*
5. *To advocate that all staff members make their views known in order that they can have some influence over decisions which are made in the team.*

These objectives can then be translated directly into the leaves of the tree as action plans. Action plans constitute specific actions to be taken in order to achieve the objectives which will help towards the achievement of goals. For example, in relation to objective 1 (above) of ensuring all of those involved in the team take part in meetings, Springwood created the following action plan:

Action plan

Goal 3, objective 1 (as above)

1. Weekly meetings will be held every Tuesday afternoon from 2.30pm - 4.00pm prior to the afternoon surgery. All staff will attend. The agenda for the meeting and notification of the meeting will be circulated by the team manager 24 hours beforehand.
2. These meetings will be chaired, but the Chair will rotate in alphabetical order around all of those in the team who wish to contribute by taking the role of Chair. The person will chair the meeting for a period of six calendar months.
3. Every six months the manager will set up a full one-day meeting where the team reviews its objectives, strategies and processes at a congenial location, to be chaired by a facilitator. All members of staff will attend this meeting and to make their views known

about the team's work. On this day, temporary staff will be appointed to ensure that the team's work is covered.

From the vision grows a solid mission statement from which can be derived the principal goals of the team. These guide the development of more detailed objectives, which translate into action plans. In turn they should prompt specific actions by team members. Articulating the vision provides the basis for all of the team's activities. Surprisingly, few teams take the time out to work out their vision, mission statement, goals, objectives and action plans.

Vision is a shared idea of a valued outcome which provides the motivation for the team's work.

In order to develop a statement of team vision, a number of dimensions must be considered. These should include its clarity, motivating value, attainability, the extent to which it is shared by team members, and its ongoing development. Each of these dimensions is described below.

The dimensions of team vision

Clarity

In order for a team to determine its objectives, goals and actions it must have a clear vision. If team members are unsure of the what the shared orientations, values and purposes of their colleagues are, it is difficult for them to articulate a clear statement which encapsulates these orientations and values. This requires that team members communicate about their work values and orientations. They must then find a form of words which expresses accurately and clearly these shared values, interests and motivations.

Motivating value

The values that we bring to our work influence the effort we put into it. Consequently for a team to work well together, team members must have some shared

sense of the value of their work. For example, in health care settings people do work which accords with a basic value of helping others. To the extent that the vision reflects the underlying values of the team it is likely to motivate team loyalty, effort and commitment.

In other settings it may not be so easy to engage people's values in the organizational objectives of the team. However, values about excellence in work, respect for individuals, and the growth and well-being of team members can be expressed within almost any context. For example, a team engaged in collecting financial debts may value treating all individuals with respect and consideration. It may also decide that team member skills should be enhanced and developed in order to encourage greater excellence both in team working and in relationships with others. Working in teams, where the vision or values are inconsistent with one's own, can create difficulties. For example, within a team in a personnel department which is being directed to appoint people on contracts offering little job security, poor pay, and poor career development opportunities, team members may work less hard simply because the approach is inconsistent with their values. Many people experience working in situations where they feel that the work that they are required to do is in conflict with their core values. The consequence is that we work less hard or look for alternative jobs - we are less motivated and less committed.

Attainability

'That man is truly free who desires what he is able to perform, and does what he desires'. (Rousseau).

When a team is set unattainable goals it can have a de-motivating effect. For example, a research and development team may be given the task of producing a new method of telephone communication such that callers who receive an engaged signal when they telephone have the option of holding until the other party's call is complete and then the phone automatically rings out. However, the space of time within which the team is required to achieve this system may be so short (for example, three months) that they have

no realistic chance of achieving the goal in the required time. Consequently their commitment and motivation may be substantially reduced. This depends to some extent upon the nature of the task they are being asked to perform. A top management team at a famine relief agency may be less de-motivated by the difficulty of achieving food for all by the year 2000, simply because of the enormous motivating value of the vision of the team. There is, therefore, a trade-off between attainability and the motivating value of a team's vision.

Sharedness

One aspect of vision is particularly important in predicting effectiveness - the extent to which the vision is shared - which is itself dependent upon the extent to which the vision is negotiated. In many organizations top management prescribe the vision and objectives of teams. This is self-contradictory: a team cannot be prescribed a vision; it must develop its own. When top management define a team's vision and objectives, the team is less motivated and effective than when the team defines its own. Where team members feel they have made a real contribution to the determination of the team's vision and objectives, they are likely to work hard to co-operate and achieve their shared, valued outcomes.

Ability to develop

A danger of team working is that decisions about vision made at one point in time, become cast in stone. Because teams are constantly evolving - the people within the teams are changing their views, developing new skills and changing values - it is important that the vision of the team evolves in the same way. Similarly, the environment within which the team operates goes through change; organizations change strategies and society changes its views. Currently, for example, there is much emphasis upon environmental protection and equal opportunities. Teams which formerly might not have considered these issues may now need to give them careful consideration. Consequently a team's vision must be regularly reviewed in order to ensure that it is alive, evolving, up-to-date

and representative of the changing values and orientations of team members. Otherwise, team vision can become a strait jacket within which the team is prevented from developing in new directions.

The elements of team vision

It is possible to consider eight major elements of team vision which are the areas upon which a team's vision may focus:

1. Consistency with organizational objectives

In general, it is usual for teams to fall in line with the goals and objectives set by the organization. However, in some circumstances a team may decide that it is important for its own values, purposes and orientations to act as a minority group which aims to bring about change in organizational objectives. For example, within the health services there is considerable debate about the conflict which exists between providing health care and reducing spending. Some teams have attempted to subvert the second orientation where they see it as conflicting with their aim of providing quality health care for all. So, in some circumstances, a team may work effectively when its vision contradicts stated organizational objectives. However, it is very important that teams are clear about when they wish to act as minority groups in order that they may develop appropriate strategies to bring about the kinds of organizational change they wish.

2. Customer/ service receiver needs

To what extent will the team work to provide excellence in service to its customers, whether they be customers within or outside the organization? To what extent are service receivers seen as people who are to be merely satisfied, rather than people who are to receive the best quality of service available? For example, a teaching team in a university department might prefer to emphasize research excellence above the quality of teaching provided to students. Alternatively, they may strive to admit as many students as possible, putting pedagogical excellence second. A car maintenance team may emphasise satisfying

the customer above ever-increasing profitability (though these two may not necessarily contradict one another).

3. Quality of product, service or function

A major emphasis within organizations in the 1990s is the quality of services and functioning within organizational settings. Team members may also discuss the extent to which top quality will characterize their own working relationships. This may be reflected in the speed with which requests for information within the team are met, and also the quality of information which is eventually produced.

4. Value to wider society

It is unusual for teams to take time out to consider the value of their work for the wider society. Consideration of this and ways in which it can be enhanced is an important way of encouraging both team cohesion and greater team effectiveness. Such consideration may promote conflict if team members perceive their work to be irrelevant to the wider society or if there are conflicts between team members about the potential value of the team's work. However, such conflict enables team members to achieve clear perception of the purposes of their work and therefore enhances team effectiveness and creativity.

5. Team climate relationships

Team climate relationships are often neglected when teams discuss their functioning. If team members have such difficult relationships that members are inclined to leave the team, long term team viability is threatened. Teams therefore need to consider the type of team climate they wish to create. Team climate refers to aspects of teamwork such as warmth, humour, amount of conflict, mutual support, sharing, backbiting, emphasis of status, participation, information sharing, level of criticism of each other's work, and support for new ideas.

6. Growth and well-being of team members

Another element of vision is support for the skill development and well-being of team members. Growth, skill development and challenge are central elements of work life

and teams can be a major source of support. They may provide opportunities for skill sharing and support for new training. One issue is the extent to which team members will support skill development and training which may further someone's career, although this may not contribute immediately to team effectiveness.

Another area of concern for a team is the general well-being of its members. This is especially true for those working in conditions of high stress, such as caring professionals. The social support which team members provide can have a buffering effect, preventing stress-related illnesses.

7. Relationships with other teams and departments in the organization

Teams rarely operate in isolation. They interact with other teams and departments within the organization, for example, in co-operating in cross-functional teams or competing for scarce resources. Therefore teams need to decide what orientation - co-operation or competition - they will adopt towards other teams and departments within their organization.

Groups often compete as a result of 'group identification', where people tend to favour their own group and discriminate against other groups. However, this often leads to destructive working relationships. Those teams which are most successful develop collaborative cross-team relationships and inter-departmental linkages. These enable them to achieve their own team goals and to help others contribute to the needs of the organizations.

8. Relationships with teams outside the organization

Similar issues arise in considering team relationships with other organizations. For example, BBC TV Continuing Education production teams are concerned with issues which affect the whole community. In producing programmes about how families can function most effectively, they may therefore want to work closely with the relevant voluntary and professional organizations. On the other hand, a team may decide to take a very critical orientation to the work of these organizations and may wish to distance itself

in the making of a programme. In order for a team to have a clear shared vision about its work, it must make explicit (where relevant) the quality and nature of relationships it seeks with external organizations and individuals.

In the modern business environment where joint ventures and tight linkages with suppliers and customers are emphasised, the skills of developing effective relationships with teams outside the organization are extremely important.

Conclusions

We began by emphasizing the fundamental importance of team vision for effective team working. This is because without a clear beacon to guide it the team can often be diverted from its course by organizational demands, the changing interests of team members, or other external pressures. With a clear sense of vision, rooted in the shared values of members, the team will maintain a good course towards its valued aims and objectives.

Ten Steps to Developing a Team Vision

STEP 1. Organise a team meeting that everyone can attend. The process of developing a team vision is often most effective when organised as an “away day” for team members and a facilitator. However, no matter where the process takes place, it is imperative that each team member attends. It is also important that each team member is focused upon the issues and understands the importance of developing a team vision.

STEP 2. Ask each team member to note down their views on each element of team vision, i.e., the degree of overlap with the organizational vision, customer emphasis, quality emphasis, value to the wider society, team climate relationships, growth and well-being of team members, and relationships with other teams within and outside the organization.

STEP 3. Pair team members together and ask them to compare their views. Ask them to note down similarities of values, and also to take special notice of areas on which their views differ. Encourage discussion and debate about the reasons for their beliefs.

STEP 4. Bring the discussion back to the whole team. Starting with the first element of team vision, ask each pair to give their opinion on where the team stands. Once all views have been heard for each particular element and have been noted on a central board, begin a discussion around the ideas presented. For elements in which there is discrepancy among team members, ask each member for their reasons behind their opinions. Bring about consensus through discussion, debate and full participation from all team members.

STEP 5. Once the elements of the team vision have been clarified, express these values in a short, concise, motivating mission statement. Once again, each team member must participate in the discussion around the articulation of the statement and agree upon its final form.

STEP 6. From the phrases of the mission statement, develop a list of goals that describe the team's overall aims. Again, participation, sharedness and clarity are extremely important.

STEP 7. Objectives must then be derived from each of the team's goals. These should be shared, attainable, clear and measurable.

STEP 8. From each objective, develop action plans which specify a clear route to reaching the goal destination. Again, these action plans need to be shared, attainable, and clear.

STEP 9. Finally, a document needs to be prepared which sets out the mission statement, the goals of the team, the objectives which relate to each goal, and the action plans which relate to each objective. Each team member should read this document and make any disagreements or worries known to other members of the team.

STEP 10. Repeat this process regularly to ensure that changes to the team or the team's environment are incorporated in the team's vision.

Checklist for Dimensions of Team Vision

Clarity

Does each team member understand and agree with the vision of the team?

Do team members communicate about their work values?

Does the team have an articulated statement explicitly expressing its vision?

Motivating Value

Is the team's vision consistent with each team member's own values and belief system?

Attainability

Are the team's objectives realistic and attainable?

Sharedness

Has the team, and not top management, defined its own vision and goals?

Does each team member share the vision of the team?

Ability to Develop

Does the team regularly review and modify their vision, goals and objectives?

Checklist for Elements of Team Vision

Consistency with the Organization

Is the team's vision consistent with the wider organizational vision and culture?

If not, is the team prepared and willing to act as a minority group effecting change within the organization?

Customer Needs

Does the team know who its customers are?

Is the team aware of its relationship with customers and of the extent to which they believe their customers needs should be met?

Quality of Function

Is the team aware of their emphasis on quality of the product, service or function they provide?

Value to Wider Society

Does the team vision incorporate the value of the team's work to the wider society?

Team Climate Relationships

Is the team aware of the climate they wish to create, e.g., support for new ideas, emphasis on status, amount of conflict, information sharing etc?

Growth and Well-being of Team Members

Does the team vision and mission statement express the degree to which skill development and training within the team will be supported?

Relationships with Other Teams in the Organization

Has the team decided whether they act in cooperation or in competition with other teams within the organization?

Relationships with Other Teams Outside the Organization

Has the team decided the quality and nature of relationships it seeks with external individuals, teams and organizations?

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